

# From Passions to Emotions

*The Creation of a Secular Psychological  
Category*

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# 1 Introduction: from passions and affections to emotions

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The use of the word emotion in English psychology is comparatively modern. It is found in Hume, but even he speaks generally rather of passions or affections. When the word emotion did become current its application was very wide, covering all possible varieties of feeling, except those that are purely sensational in their origin.

James Mark Baldwin, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* (1905), I, 316

## **How history can help us think about ‘the emotions’**

Emotions are everywhere today. Increasing numbers of books and articles about the emotions are being produced; for both academic and broader audiences; by neuroscientists, psychologists and philosophers. As the author of one recent book on the science of the emotions puts it: ‘Emotion is now a hot topic.’<sup>1</sup> According to another, the last three decades have witnessed an explosion in emotion studies, in the fields of cognitive psychology, anthropology and literary history, which constitutes a veritable ‘revolution’.<sup>2</sup> Recent academic work in a range of fields has celebrated the body and the emotions, in a reaction against the alleged preoccupation with intellect and reason to be found in earlier studies. There is now even such a thing as ‘Emotional Intelligence’, or ‘EQ’, analogous to IQ.<sup>3</sup> Being in touch with one’s emotions is, for many, an unquestioned good. The existence and the great value of the emotions is obvious to academics and non-academics alike. It is surprising, then, to discover that the emotions did not exist until just under two hundred years ago.

In this book I investigate the creation of ‘the emotions’ as a psychological category. By seeing how this category was conceived, and by looking at the different psychological categories it replaced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, I aim to provide readers with resources that will help them to step back from the contemporary obviousness of the existence and importance of ‘the emotions’ and to ask fundamental questions

<sup>1</sup> Evans (2001), xiii.    <sup>2</sup> Reddy (2001), ix–x.    <sup>3</sup> Goleman (1995, 1996).

about this category's meaning and value. In other words, I hope my historical account will stimulate philosophical and psychological reflection. Of particular importance to this story is the displacement, in the history of systematic psychological theorising, of more differentiated typologies (which included appetites, passions, affections and sentiments) by a single over-arching category of emotions during the nineteenth century. Perhaps these past typologies will give readers pause for thought, and encourage them to ask whether the emotions, as we think of them today in psychology and philosophy, really form a coherent category.<sup>4</sup> I will suggest that a more differentiated typology would be a useful tool, and would help us to avoid making sweeping claims about all 'emotions' being good or bad things, rational or irrational, virtuous or vicious. The over-inclusivity of our modern-day category of emotions has hampered attempts to argue with any subtlety about the nature and value of the enormous range of passionate, affectionate, sentimental, felt and committed mental states and stances of which we are capable.

My argument about the historical provenance of modern theories of the emotions is revisionist, especially with respect to Robert Solomon's thesis in his influential book *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life* (1976, 1993).<sup>5</sup> Solomon's thesis is, in short, that Western thinkers have been prone, right up to the late twentieth century, to take a negative view of the emotions and to think of them as inherently bodily, involuntary and irrational. Solomon blames this negative view of emotions on the influence of rationalist views (in which reason and the emotions are antagonists) that have been dominant among Western philosophers in general and certain Christian theologians in particular.

Solomon's was the first in a spate of books in recent decades that all seek, in one way or another, to rehabilitate the emotions. Philosophers including Ronald de Sousa, Michael Stocker, Dylan Evans and Peter Goldie, the brain scientist Antonio Damasio, and the psychologists Keith Oatley and Robert Lazarus have all contributed to this literature.<sup>6</sup> Many of these writers also echo Solomon's thesis that from antiquity up until the late twentieth century philosophers and psychologists have generally, and misguidedly, thought of reason and the emotions as antagonists. Solomon calls this supposedly prevailing view the 'Myth of the Passions'; Damasio calls it 'Descartes' Error'. One of my aims in this book is to show

<sup>4</sup> For a very helpful article summarising recent debates about the natural kind status of 'emotion', and arguing that 'emotion' is indeed a natural kind term, see Charland (2002).

<sup>5</sup> Solomon (1993a).

<sup>6</sup> De Sousa (1987); Stocker (1996); Evans (2001); Goldie (2000); Damasio (1994); Oatley (1992); Lazarus (1991).

how these views on the history of ideas about passions and emotions are themselves, in certain respects, mythical and erroneous.

The historical story I tell here turns Solomon's view on its head. I argue that it was in fact the recent departure from traditional views about the passions (not the influence of those views) that led to the creation of a category of 'emotions' that was conceived in opposition to reason, intellect and will. The category of emotions, conceived as a set of morally disengaged, bodily, non-cognitive and involuntary feelings, is a recent invention. Prior to the creation of the emotions as an over-arching category, more subtlety had been possible on these questions. The 'affections', and the 'moral sentiments', for example, could be understood as both rational and voluntary movements of the soul, while still being subjectively warm and lively psychological states. It is not the case that prior to the 1970s no one had realised that thinking, willing and feeling were (and should be) intertwined in one way or another. Almost everybody had realised this. Too many contemporary writers still appeal, nonetheless, to the idea (in order to create a rhetorical counterpoint for their own account of the value and/or rationality of the emotions) that either a particular individual, or school of thought, or period, or even the entire history of philosophy has been characterised by the view that the emotions (or feelings or passions) are entirely insidious and are to be subjected at all times to almighty reason. Anything more than the briefest of glances at the history of thought establishes that this is a thoroughly untenable idea, even when applied to Stoic or Christian philosophers (those most often accused of passion- or emotion-hatred).<sup>7</sup>

Solomon is quite right to draw attention to the difficult existential and moral questions that arise from thinking of passions or emotions as alien powers that act against our rational will. If our emotions are not our own, then how can we identify with them as expressions of our true selves? And how could we be held morally responsible for actions resulting from them?<sup>8</sup> Solomon's historical account of where this view of emotions as involuntary forces came from, however, is off-target. One of the main problems with his thesis (and with some of the other recent books arguing along similar lines), as will emerge below, is that it does not clearly differentiate between 'passions' and 'emotions', nor does it acknowledge that theorists of the passions often also employed the concepts of 'affections' and 'sentiments' to refer to more cognitive and refined feelings. Solomon's history of ideas about passions and emotions is somewhat distorted as a result. He is by no means the only writer to have overlooked

<sup>7</sup> On Stoic and early Christian attitudes to passions, will and reason, see Sorabji (2000).

<sup>8</sup> On the moral dimensions of these problems, see also Oakley (1992).

these distinctions, but is representative of a recent school of thought that emphasises the cognitive and rational aspects of emotions, of which he was one of the earliest and most influential exponents.

*The basic historical puzzle*

It is an immensely striking fact of the history of English-language psychological thought that during the period between *c.*1800 and *c.*1850 a wholesale change in established vocabulary occurred such that those engaged in theoretical discussions about phenomena including hope, fear, love, hate, joy, sorrow, anger and the like no longer primarily discussed the passions or affections of the soul, nor the sentiments, but almost invariably referred to ‘the emotions’. This transition is as striking as if established conceptual terms such as ‘reason’ or ‘memory’ or ‘imagination’ or ‘will’ had been quite suddenly replaced by a wholly new category.

The puzzling historical question, then, at the heart of this book (a question that, equally puzzlingly, has rarely been posed before, let alone answered) is: when and why did English-language psychological writers stop using ‘passions’, ‘affections’ and ‘sentiments’ as their primary categories and start referring instead to the ‘emotions’?

*The secularisation of psychology*

One important element of my answer to this central historical question is that it was the secularisation of psychology that gave rise to the creation and adoption of the new category of ‘emotions’ and influenced the way it was originally and has subsequently been conceived. Since this is an important part of my argument, it may be worth making some comments here to explain and defend my focus on religious and theological dimensions of the history of psychology in this book.

The first consideration is a *prima facie* observation about the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts in question. At first glance, the shift from the language of passions and affections to the language of emotions seems to provide strong evidence of the way that religious and psychological ideas have been connected in the past. To speak of ‘passions and affections of the soul’ was to embed one’s thought in a network of more distinctively Christian concepts and categories. In contrast, the category of ‘emotions’ was alien to traditional Christian thought and was part of a newer and more secular network of words and ideas. No one (to my knowledge) ever wrote books called *The Psychology of the Passions* or *The Emotions of the Soul*. ‘Emotions’, unlike ‘affections’, ‘passions’, ‘desires’ and ‘lusts’ did not appear in any English translation of

the Bible. These simple observations highlight an important fact about the way that these terms derived their meanings from networks of related concepts. The words 'passions' and 'affections' belonged to a network of words such as 'of the soul', 'conscience', 'fall', 'sin', 'grace', 'Spirit', 'Satan', 'will', 'lower appetite', 'self-love' and so on. The word 'emotions' was, from the outset, part of a different network of terms such as 'psychology', 'law', 'observation', 'evolution', 'organism', 'brain', 'nerves', 'expression', 'behaviour' and 'viscera'.

While anti-religious and merely non-religious psychologists were not the only ones to use the word 'emotions', they did so sooner and integrated the category into their psychologies more readily than did their Christian contemporaries. Influential figures in secular science and psychology in the mid-nineteenth century, such as Charles Darwin, Alexander Bain and Herbert Spencer, were among these early 'emotions' theorists (see chapter 5). Christian writers, especially in more conservative environments such as Oxford and Cambridge (and some American colleges) continued to use the terms 'will', 'passions', 'affections' and 'sentiments' much more than the term 'emotions' (see chapter 6). There was, then, a correlation between the adoption of the new 'emotions' discourse on the one hand, and lack of traditional Christian belief on the other. There was also a correlation, later in the century, when the transition to 'emotions' talk had become a *fait accompli*, between Christian faith and the adoption of cognitive and anti-reductionist theories of emotions.

These *prima facie* correlations provide the primary reason for taking an interest in religious and theological dimensions of psychology in my historical account of the creation of the category of 'emotions'. It is important to add at the outset, however, that, prior to the emergence of the category of 'emotions', the language of 'passions' and 'affections' was used by both religious and non-religious writers on human mental life, and both terms had a variety of different meanings. 'Passions' for example could be used to refer in a vague way to a broad range of impulses and feelings, or to refer to a smaller set of particularly troubling disturbances of the mind, such as anger and sexual desire. Secular moralists and literary writers, as well as more explicitly theological and religious writers on the faculties of the soul, used the terms 'passions' and 'affections'. So there is no simple identification to be made, for example, between theorists who spoke of 'passions' and 'affections' and Christian thinkers. Nevertheless, the distinction between passions and affections, and the categories themselves, did derive historically from theological psychologies and were well suited to a Christian understanding of the human person in which a free and active will was a particularly important



faculty. The will was central to the story of the fall of Adam and Eve, and to Christian concepts of moral responsibility, sin and salvation. Additionally, after the emergence of the category of ‘emotions’, and an alternative psychological vocabulary, use of the language of ‘soul’, ‘will’, ‘passions’ and ‘affections’ served, where it had not before, as a mark of allegiance to older ways of thinking about human mental life. It is then a difficult task to distinguish between writings that should be interpreted simply as examples of ‘traditional’ or ‘old-fashioned’ thought about mental life, and those that should be described as distinctively ‘religious’ or ‘Christian’. This is where it will be important to look for evidence external to the psychological theories themselves of the religious or anti-religious commitments of the authors under consideration.

### **Methodological questions: some problems with presentism**

In addition to evidence of important links between particular areas of religious and psychological language in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there are some more general methodological considerations relevant to the decision to think about theological and religious dimensions of the history of psychology. I will examine these briefly here before returning to provide an overview of my answer to the historical puzzle of how ‘the emotions’ came to be created.

#### *Presentism and the omission of a theological dimension*

The reasons it is worthwhile trying to understand the theological dimensions of the history of psychology are both historical and psychological. First, historically, understanding these dimensions throws light on where secular psychology came from – what it was building upon and what it was reacting against. Secondly, such an enterprise can help stimulate contemporary psychological theorising. Christian and theistic psychologies of the past (as well as secular ones) provide interesting alternative voices that can give a different angle on contemporary psychological debates about, for instance, theories of emotions. Trying to understand psychological models that are based on metaphysical assumptions that are quite different from those of contemporary academic psychologies helps to bring home the fact that there are many different possible ways of understanding and carving up human mental life. A history that looks especially at religious and theological assumptions in past psychologies might, perhaps even more than a history of secular psychological thought, be able to provide a healthy antidote to the tendency to swallow too uncritically

the assumptions, theories and terminologies of contemporary academic psychology.

Histories of philosophy and, especially, of psychology, often display a lack of familiarity with or a lack of interest in these dimensions. So, in the case of histories of theories of passions and emotions, the views of Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Spinoza, Darwin, James and Wundt on passions and emotions are relatively well-known and have received considerable and repeated attention, to the extent that they have begun to make up a rather one-dimensional and stale canon of historical theorists of passions and emotions.<sup>9</sup> The views of psychological thinkers with religious concerns, such as Augustine and Aquinas, Jonathan Edwards and Joseph Butler, Thomas Reid and Thomas Brown, Thomas Chalmers and William Lyall, James McCosh and George T. Ladd, are much more rarely mentioned.<sup>10</sup>

The omission of a theological dimension from the history of psychology sometimes seems to have been the result of the adoption of ‘presentist’ methodological assumptions. It is sometimes assumed, for example, that writing a history of psychology involves finding ‘precursors’ of contemporary psychological thinkers and thoughts. The result, when the contemporary field is largely autonomous and secular, is a rather distortedly secular history, in which past thinkers are of interest only insofar as they ‘foreshadow’ the ‘scientific’ psychology of the last century or so. This is the approach taken by Gardiner *et al.* in their general history of past theories of passions, affections, feelings and emotions. These theories are interpreted as a gradual approach towards a satisfactory twentieth-century ‘scientific psychological theory’.<sup>11</sup> George Mandler provides an explicit statement of this sort of methodology in a chapter on ‘The Psychology of Emotion: Past and Present’ in his 1984 cognitive psychology book on emotions and stress:

I approach the history of emotion as a movement toward its current state . . . I have culled the important milestones of the past hundred years with that goal in mind. I look backward to see what has brought us to the current state of the art . . . In reviewing these trends, I will stress cumulative influences, believing that the history of science is a history of cumulative insights and cumulative knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

It may sometimes be defensible to approach history in this way, but there are certainly some important objections to doing so. First, such an approach trades on the implicit assumption that the truth of current theory

<sup>9</sup> For more on this, see ch. 8, Conclusions.

<sup>10</sup> Susan James is again an exception, at least in the cases of Augustine and Aquinas. James (1997), chs. 1, 3 and 5.

<sup>11</sup> Gardiner *et al.* (1970), 386. <sup>12</sup> Mandler (1984), 15.

brought us here – it is tacitly teleological. Secondly, in looking only to very similar precursors, it a priori excludes all sorts of influences that do not resemble present-day psychology of emotion and so produces a radically internalist and problematically narrow and naïve account. A particularly stark example of such an exclusion of theology from psychology's authentic past is to be found in Brett's *History of Psychology* (1921) in his treatment of Spencer: 'Spencer produced a change in the attitude toward psychology; he made clearer the sense in which psychology is a *natural* science. The movement aroused great opposition from the advocates of the supernatural quality of the soul, but this was a passing phase that belongs only to the history of culture.'<sup>13</sup> The idea that religion and theology, but not psychology, are parts of 'culture' and the assumption that religiously motivated views about mental life and the soul were not part of a psychological enterprise are both views that are rejected in the present work.

More recent historians of psychology have displayed some similar tendencies. William Woodward, in his 1982 introduction to *The Problematic Science: Psychology in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, mentions several important vehicles for psychological thought in the nineteenth century, including Kantian philosophy, psychobiology, psychophysics, child psychology and social psychology, but does not mention theology. Graham Richards in his equivalent summary of nineteenth-century intellectual enterprises that contributed to psychological thought, in his 1992 study, *Mental Machinery: The Origins and Consequences of Psychological Ideas*, lists philosophers, scientists, psychiatrists, physicians, economists, criminologists and educationalists, but, again, not theologians.<sup>14</sup> It is of interest to debate which of theology, philosophy, medicine, psychiatry or biological science had more influence and in what areas of psychological thought in the nineteenth century; but to omit theology from the picture altogether – especially while including, for example, economics and criminology – is misleading. During the nineteenth century, theologians, preachers and Christian philosophers were amongst the most widely read and influential figures contributing to thought about the soul and mind.

I am certainly not alone amongst recent historians of psychology in seeing a need to broaden the canon of the history of psychology. This broadening has started to happen to some extent, most notably through the efforts of authors seeking to include literary figures in psychology's past.<sup>15</sup> Rick Rylance's book, *Victorian Psychology and British*

<sup>13</sup> Brett (1921), III, 215.

<sup>14</sup> Woodward, 'Introduction' to Woodward and Ash (eds.) (1982); Richards (1992), ch. 8.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Shuttleworth (1996); Reed (1997), Preface; Rylance (2000); Wood (2001).

*Culture 1850–1880*, is one of the works responsible for this shift, and is also one of the only histories of psychology to have properly recognised *theological* discourse as a form of psychological discourse. Rylance divides nineteenth-century British psychological discourse into four categories – the discourse of the soul, the discourse of philosophy, the discourse of physiology and the discourse of medicine. Each of these discourses persisted throughout the century (albeit in various forms and with varying measures of success), as both Rylance’s work and the present study aim to show. Edward Reed has also argued for the importance of the religious dimensions of psychological thought in the nineteenth century. However, he is rather over-stating the case when he claims that ‘psychology succeeded in becoming a science in large part because of its defense of a theological conception of human nature typically associated with liberal Protestant theology’.<sup>16</sup> (I will return to Reed’s claims in the context of my own conclusions, in chapter 8.)

Paying attention, then, to some of the theological variables at work, the psychological systems that form the subject of this book are sometimes categorised as ‘Christian’, and sometimes as ‘secular’, depending on the authorities, methods, concepts and categories adopted in analysing human mental life. There are many texts, however, which are predicated on theistic belief and purport to privilege God (often the Christian God), but which fail to qualify as ‘theological’ or ‘Christian’ psychologies since there is little or no use of traditional Christian authorities, methods, concepts or categories. These texts are variously described as ‘unchristian’, or ‘atheological’, or as examples of merely metaphysical theism. ‘Unchristian’ and ‘atheological’ are terms, like ‘amoral’, which I intend to indicate the absence of something rather than its inversion or denial.<sup>17</sup> Generally, when I say that a text is Christian, I will mean that the arguments and teachings of the text are ‘full-bloodedly’ Christian – that they are embedded in the language and teachings of the Christian tradition. ‘Metaphysical theism’, in contrast, is a term I use to refer to certain beliefs that include the existence of a God who is perhaps conceived of as ‘Deity’, ‘Architect’, ‘Author’, ‘Mind’, or as ‘the All’, but who is not described using the language and symbols of Christianity (or any other religious tradition). Texts produced by some moralists, mental scientists and design theologians in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries fall into this ‘halfway house’ category between Christian psychology and thoroughly secular psychology (including works by the moralist Joseph Butler, the Edinburgh moral

<sup>16</sup> Reed (1997), 7.

<sup>17</sup> For a fuller and broader definition and use of the terms ‘atheology’ and ‘atheological’, see Dixon (1999). I am not using the term in the same way as the theologian Mark C. Taylor, who has written about ‘a/theology’; Taylor (1984).

philosopher Thomas Brown and the neurologist and natural theologian Sir Charles Bell). The works of several authors considered in chapter 6 also fall into this category of ‘metaphysical theism’, including those by the philosophical psychologist J. D. Morell, the Scottish-Canadian minister and philosopher William Lyall, and Noah Porter, the President of Yale. Christology, Trinitarian theology and the doctrines of sin, the fall and grace are among the omissions of such thin theisms. In the way I use these terms, then, a Christian author can produce a thinly theistic text (or indeed a thoroughly secular one). In calling a psychological text thinly theistic, unchristian, or atheological, I do not preclude the possibility that the author was a committed Christian (as, in fact, was the case with Butler, Bell, Lyall and Porter).

*Presentism and the meanings of ‘psychology’ and ‘science’*

In his recent study, *Alchemies of the Mind: Rationality and the Emotions* (1999), Jon Elster includes a chapter on ‘Emotions before Psychology’, which opens with two sentences that illustrate very well the sort of presentist assumptions about psychology and science that I am seeking to challenge: ‘The psychological analysis of the emotions is little more than a hundred years old. Darwin’s *Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals* (1872) and William James’ “What is an Emotion” (1884) are the first studies of the emotions using scientific methodology.’<sup>18</sup> These claims are arguable, but – according to the definitions of psychology and science preferred here – are mistaken. Elster, like Mandler, David Rapaport and others, considers the psychology of emotions to go back only to the late nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> In fact, the psychological analysis of emotions goes back nearer two hundred than one hundred years (to the lectures delivered in Edinburgh by Thomas Brown between 1810 and 1820). And the psychological analysis of passions goes back millennia (as Elster’s own exposition of Aristotle’s views implicitly acknowledges). The claim that the psychological analysis of emotions is only one hundred years old depends on defining ‘psychology’ in a narrow sense as professional academic, scientific psychology. The definition preferred here is that psychology is the systematic study of (primarily human) mental life. Brown’s analysis of emotions only fails to be psychological if psychology is required to refer to nerves, brains, viscera, behaviour and other outward and physically measurable events.

<sup>18</sup> Elster (1999), 48; the actual title of Darwin’s work was *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*.

<sup>19</sup> Rapaport (1971) takes Darwin and James to be the authors of ‘early theories’ of emotions (22–3).

Elster's second claim – that Darwin and James were the first to apply scientific methodology to emotions – is also debatable. Again, scientific methodology was applied by Brown to the emotions and by others before him to the passions and affections. Empiricist and associationist philosophers such as David Hume, David Hartley, Dugald Stewart and James Mill, as well as Brown, all aspired to apply the inductive scientific method to mental life (see chapter 4). Inspired by Bacon, and by Newton's comment at the end of his *Opticks* (1704), that the inductive methods of natural philosophy could be successfully applied also to 'moral philosophy', Scottish empiricists developed systems of 'mental science' that sought to produce laws of mental life on the basis of inward observations or 'introspection'.<sup>20</sup> The Scottish minister and philosopher Thomas Reid – the central figure of the Scottish 'common sense' school – in his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), expressed the hope that mental philosophers would 'produce a system of the power and operations of the human mind no less certain than those of optics or astronomy'.<sup>21</sup> The resulting systems of psychology only fail to be applications of 'scientific methodology' if that phrase is defined to mean the discovery only of physical causes and components, to the exclusion of the study of mind qua mind.

It might be considered something of a methodological anomaly that I am prepared to use the term 'psychology' anachronistically (to refer to authors such as Edwards, Watts, Butler, Reid or Brown, who wrote either before the term psychology had been coined or before it had taken on its modern meaning) while insisting at the same time on a scrupulous avoidance of anachronism in the use of the term 'emotions'. The reason for this decision relates to the current use of the terms in histories of psychology and philosophy. In each case the usage favoured in this book is adopted as a corrective to problematic usage in existing secondary literature.

The word 'emotions' is currently often used carelessly and anachronistically to refer to theories that were in fact about 'passions', 'affections', or 'sentiments'. It should, instead, be restricted to those theories that are explicitly about 'emotions'; there are important differences in nuance to all these terms that should not be effaced. The word 'emotions' is

<sup>20</sup> David Hume, David Hartley and James Mill all expressed the desire to be the Newton of the mind; see Mischel (1966), 126, 136. For further references to the importance of Bacon, of Newton's comment in the *Opticks* and of scientific methodology in general to Scottish philosophy, see Payne (1828), 17–20; McCosh (1875), 3, 99, 195; Laurie (1902), 1–9, 124–5, 218; Grave (1960), 7, 147–9; Cantor (1975), esp. 128–31; Olson (1975), chs. 1 and 2; Flynn (1988); Wood (1989 and 1990); Emerson (1990); Graham (2001).

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Flynn (1988), 264.

currently used too liberally by historians of psychology and its reference needs to be narrowed.

The word 'psychology', in contrast, is used rather too restrictively or chauvinistically, as has been noted above, to refer to modern scientific psychology (physiological, behavioural, neurological and evolutionary psychology and, sometimes, cognitive psychology and psychoanalysis) and its precursors. Thus other contributions to the understanding of mental life are often neglected by historians of psychology. One of the aims of this book is to rectify this situation with particular reference to the contributions of theological thought to the emergence of modern psychological concepts, categories and methods. 'Psychology' is used below to refer to a broader tradition of systematic thought about mental life rather than just to modern or scientific psychology.

The word 'science', like the word 'psychology', is at times used below more liberally than is often the case in contemporary discussions. This is in part a result of adopting the language and categories of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century figures being discussed. The word 'science' as used in contemporary discussions tends to be used to refer to the 'physical' or 'natural' sciences. In this book it will not always be so restricted. Many of the authors under consideration advocated a 'science of the mind', but we would be mistaken to read such a proposition in the light of current meanings of 'science'. A majority of those thinkers discussed below who advocated 'science of the mind' or 'mental science' meant a systematic investigation into the mental causes and mental components of mental states and not their physical causes, correlates or components.<sup>22</sup>

The use of the word 'science' in the singular is always problematic (as is the use of 'religion' or 'theology' in the singular) insofar as it tends to disguise the plural reality of those enterprises to which it refers. The plurality of the sciences is one of the reasons why an espousal of 'science' of the mind is never completely free from ambiguity. Which science, if any, is to be emulated? Is the mind to be chemically analysed into mental elements, or are its states to be botanically ordered and classified, or is the physiology of the nerves and viscera to be used to understand the mind, or are law-like regularities as precise of those of physics the ultimate goal? Does psychology need a Newton or perhaps a Lavoisier or a Darwin to bring about its elevation to the ranks of 'science'?<sup>23</sup> Is the science of the mind in fact to be a science of the mind or a science of something else, such as the brain or behaviour? Is it to be 'science by analogy' or 'physical science proper'?

<sup>22</sup> See n.20.      <sup>23</sup> See James (1894a), 292–3.

*Existing histories of emotions*

Approaching existing literature on historical developments in philosophy, psychology and psychiatry reveals that it is not widely acknowledged that our concept of ‘emotions’ has only emerged during the last two centuries, and that it is not synonymous with other categories such as ‘passions’, ‘agitations’, ‘sentiments’ or ‘feelings’. This tendency to equivocate is evident in the titles of four of the most interesting books on the subject: Susan James’ study of seventeenth-century thought about the passions, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (1997), Solomon’s *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life* (1976, 1993), Richard Sorabji’s *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (2000) and William Reddy’s *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (2001).<sup>24</sup> James acknowledges the problem of using ‘emotions’ to refer to the ‘passions’ discussed by seventeenth-century thinkers: ‘[T]heir category of passions does not coincide with modern interpretations of the category of emotion... Some early-modern writers use the terms “passion” and “emotion” synonymously. But in following their practice, we need to remember that their sense of these terms diverges from common contemporary usage.’<sup>25</sup> James gives Descartes as an example of an early-modern writer using the terms interchangeably. Leaving aside for the moment the complicating factor that he was writing in French, it is true that in *Les Passions de l’Ame* (1649), Descartes made use of the term ‘*émotions*’ in two ways, first as a synonym for ‘*passions*’ in the broadest sense, and secondly in the phrase ‘*émotions intérieures*’ to refer to a restricted class of intellectual feelings.<sup>26</sup> It is suggested in chapter 4 that Descartes’ use of ‘*émotions*’ as a broad umbrella term for movements of the soul was quite possibly the source of the term ‘emotions’ in the writings of Scottish philosophers from Hume onwards.

As has already been mentioned, Solomon’s use of the terms ‘passions’ and ‘emotions’ is somewhat confusing. At times he idiosyncratically distinguishes between the terms by treating ‘emotions’ as a subset of ‘passions’; at other times he problematically treats them as synonyms, defining them both as cognitive judgments that shape subjective reality.<sup>27</sup> The target of Solomon’s criticisms, the ‘myth of the passions’ as he calls it, has three principal components: it teaches that passions/emotions are primarily physiological, that they are non-cognitive feelings and that they are alien involuntary powers that can overwhelm people against their

<sup>24</sup> Solomon (1993a); James (1997); Sorabji (2000); Reddy (2001).

<sup>25</sup> James (1997), 7. <sup>26</sup> James (1997), 196–207.

<sup>27</sup> Solomon (1993a), viii, xvii–xviii, and throughout.



wills. This position is a combination of views; it contains some elements of traditional Christian views of the passions as well as some elements of nineteenth- and twentieth-century physiological theories of emotions. A better historical understanding of the way that theologians and philosophers differentiated between passions and affections in the past, and of how divergence from this model led to the creation of the category of 'emotions', will make it easier for contemporary theorists to be clear about the meanings of these key terms. It is particularly interesting to realise, I argue below, that the three principal teachings ascribed by Solomon to the 'myth of the passions' – that emotions are physiological, non-cognitive and involuntary feelings – are all ideas that gained currency as a result of divergence from traditional teachings about the 'passions' and 'affections' and the concomitant adoption of the secular category of 'emotions' in the nineteenth century.

Kurt Danziger is one of the few historians of psychology to have acknowledged the methodological problems that arise as a result of terminological differences between past and present psychologies. He gives the example of volumes of historical readings in psychology that organise the material under subject headings such as 'motivation', 'intelligence' and so on.

Almost invariably, those key terms are taken from the accepted vocabulary of twentieth-century (American) psychology and not from the vocabularies of the authors of the selected pre-twentieth-century texts. The use of contemporary terms strongly suggests that the objects of current psychological discourse are the real, natural objects and that past discourse necessarily referred to the same objects in its own quaint and subscientific way. What this organisation of historical material overlooks is the possibility that the very objects of psychological discourse, and not just opinions about them, have changed radically in the course of history.<sup>28</sup>

Although not specifically directed to the problem of the history of 'passions' and 'emotions', Danziger's diagnosis applies extremely well to it. 'Emotions' have only been objects of psychological discourse for approximately two hundred years; before that time 'passions', 'affections' and 'sentiments' were among the mental phenomena discussed by psychological thinkers.<sup>29</sup> A lack of historical perspective can lead towards the implausible view that current academic psychology has

<sup>28</sup> Danziger (1990), 336.

<sup>29</sup> Roger Smith (1997) rightly says that 'Passion cannot simply be equated with the modern category of emotion.' He goes on to say that emotion in its modern sense 'was not in common use until the late eighteenth century' (60). I would suggest that while it was used by a handful of aesthetic and mental philosophers in the late eighteenth century, it was not widely used, certainly not in a clearly understood sense, until almost fifty years after that.

produced a fixed set of categories that are the best or only way to categorise human mental life.

The one general history that exists in this area, Gardiner *et al.*'s *Feeling and Emotion: A History of Theories* (1937), suffers from this problem identified by Danziger, of assuming that historical theories are all, in essence, theories of the objects of twentieth-century psychological discourse. Gardiner *et al.* unreflectively treat past theories of passions, affections, feelings, sentiments etc. as theories about 'affective phenomena' or 'emotions' as they have been conceived by psychologists in the twentieth century.

Other than Gardiner *et al.*'s book (which is very useful as a work of reference despite its presentist historiography) the history of emotions has generally taken the form of histories of specific emotions. Among the principal recent contributors to histories of this sort have been Peter Stearns and Carol Stearns, who have produced individual social historical studies of anger, jealousy and fear.<sup>30</sup> There have also been studies on romantic love, sexual sensibility and family relationships.<sup>31</sup> All these studies concentrate on historical changes in social attitudes and standards with regard to the experience and expression of specific emotions. There is, then, a healthy industry in the social history of specific emotions. There has, until recently, however, been a relative poverty of histories of general theories of emotion (and of passions, affections and sentiments).<sup>32</sup> Some of the most useful existing historical studies of ideas about passions and emotions are to be found outside of general mainstream histories of psychology and philosophy, especially in two areas: the history of psychopathology and psychiatry, and literary studies.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Stearns and Stearns (1986); Stearns (1989); Stearns and Haggerty (1991).

<sup>31</sup> For reviews of this literature, see Stearns (1993); Pinch (1995).

<sup>32</sup> Recent works have begun to fill this gap, including Richard Sorabji's study of ancient Greek (especially Stoic) and early Christian thought about what he calls 'emotions' (see chapter 2 below for a discussion of the variety of Greek and Latin terms used); Susan James' book on theories of passion and action in the seventeenth century; William Reddy's discussion of both contemporary theories of emotion and of attitudes to passions and sentiments in the period surrounding the French Revolution; an eclectic book by John Cottingham investigating the roles of passion and reason in the ethics of classical antiquity, Descartes and the psychoanalytic school; and a helpful recent article on nineteenth- and twentieth-century emotion theories by Eric Salzen; Sorabji (2000), James (1997), Reddy (2001), Cottingham (1998), Salzen (2001). James Averill and Kathleen Grange have both written informatively on the use of different metaphors for passions and emotions in the past; Grange (1962); Averill (1990). These works, however, have not focussed, as the current study does, on the significance of differences between theories of passions, affections, sentiments and emotions.

<sup>33</sup> For relevant material relating to the history of psychiatry, see Berrios (1996); Hunter and Macalpine (1963); Skultans (1975); Grange (1961); Luyendijk-Elshout (1990); Weiner (1990). Turning to works in literary fields, see Hilton (1988), 314–19; Shuttleworth (1996); Pinch (1996); Elster (1999); Ellison (1999); Wood (2001).

While none of these works ponders the significance of the historical shifts in usage from ‘passions’, ‘sentiments’ and ‘affections’ to ‘emotions’ at any length, they all broaden the canon and the scope of the history of affective psychology in valuable ways. Indeed, for their purposes, Julie Ellison may be right that it is not always necessary to try, as I do below, to clarify the differences between these terms; she is one of many writers who are happy to use ‘emotion’ as a catch-all term covering a wide variety of past and present uses of ‘passion’, ‘sensibility’, ‘sympathy’, ‘sentiment’ and ‘affection’.<sup>34</sup>

Science-and-religion historiography has focussed generally on either physics or evolutionary biology. Psychology has been much less attended to by historians of science and religion. This is partly because of the same assumptions made by many historians of psychology – that ‘psychology’ only began with the work of early professional academic scientific psychologists at the end of the nineteenth century – and also, perhaps, because some take the view that prior to that time psychology was not a ‘science’ with which ‘religion’ could engage. Certainly the status of psychology as a ‘science’ has always been contested.<sup>35</sup> John Hedley Brooke’s definitive work, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (1991), and his Gifford Lectures with Geoffrey Cantor, are representative of the literature in treating psychology sporadically and briefly, while giving more extensive coverage to physics, chemistry and (especially evolutionary) biology.<sup>36</sup> Writing in 1988, Boyd Hilton listed geology, astronomy, magnetism, physics, biology, palaeontology and natural history as areas in which historians had appreciated the influence of theological convictions on the development of science.<sup>37</sup> His own work added political economy and social theory to that list. Although some writers in the field of science and religion have recently started to focus on psychology,<sup>38</sup> it still remains largely neglected by historians of the relationships between theology and science, just as theology is largely neglected by historians of psychology.<sup>39</sup>

This study, then, aims to supplement the existing literature, focussing particularly on the significance of the neglected transition from theories of

<sup>34</sup> Ellison (1999), 4–5.      <sup>35</sup> Woodward and Ash (eds.) (1982).

<sup>36</sup> Among those whose views of mind Brooke considers are Descartes, Priestley, James, and Freud. See Brooke (1991), 127–30, 171–80, 319–20, 324–5; Brooke and Cantor (1998).

<sup>37</sup> Hilton (1988), x.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. Jeeves (1997); Brown *et al.* (eds.) (1998); Watts (1997, 1998, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> An exception is Spilka (1987): a short article on science and religion in early American psychology, dealing with Hickok, McCosh, Porter and Upham. Jacyna (1981) and Cashdollar (1989) are also exceptions in that they provide studies of nineteenth-century thinkers, from a philosophical and theological point of view, whose psychological thought was seen as a threat to or a defence of Christian orthodoxy. Neither, however, is explicitly a contribution to the history of ‘science and religion’, nor to the history of psychology.

passions and affections of the soul to theories of emotions. This transition has been addressed only twice in recent years, once in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty's article 'From passions to emotions and sentiments' (1982), and once in a brief section of Kurt Danziger's *Naming the Mind: How Psychology Found its Language* (1997).<sup>40</sup> Rorty criticises contemporary psychologists and philosophers for their lack of interest in previous theories of passions.<sup>41</sup> Her own analysis, however, extends only to Descartes and Hume, and mistakenly supposes 'passions' talk to have been simply unsatisfactory 'emotions' talk.

Danziger, like Rorty, focusses on Hume and argues that Hume's *Treatise* was a watershed that marked the beginning of the end for the dichotomy between reason and the passions. Danziger's theory is that the emergence of the concept of 'emotions', in which he rightly notes that Brown was an important figure (see chapter 4 in this volume), was indicative of the fading of this reason–passion dichotomy. This view is questionable for two reasons. First, the reason–passion dichotomy was not so stark as Danziger and others sometimes suggest: within many traditional and Christian views there had been a place for 'affections' and 'sentiments', which in effect were potentially rational and virtuous passions. Christian writers such as Edwards conceptualised affections in a way that kept reason and will in tension (see chapter 3). Secondly, the reason–passion dichotomy was replaced in the nineteenth century by an even stronger intellect–emotion dichotomy, exemplified in the works of Brown, Chalmers and James amongst others (see chapters 4–7). In the absence of categories such as 'affections' and 'sentiments' that bridged the gap between thinking and feeling, secular psychologies of emotions were left with a simple and sharp dichotomy between cognition and emotion.

In 1905 James Mark Baldwin and G. F. Stout gave an accurate assessment of the historical transition from passions and affections to emotions in their essay on 'emotion' in Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*: 'The use of the word emotion in English psychology is comparatively modern. It is found in Hume, but even he speaks generally rather of passions or affections. When the word emotion did become current its application was very wide, covering all possible varieties of feeling, except those that are purely sensational in their origin.'<sup>42</sup> Baldwin and Stout were right that in the English language the term 'emotions' took over from 'passions' and 'affections' as the dominant term only around the middle of the nineteenth century (and that it was a very broad category). In general, however, it does not seem to have occurred to many

<sup>40</sup> Rorty (1982); Danziger (1997), 39–42.

<sup>41</sup> Rorty (1982), 172.

<sup>42</sup> 'Emotion' in Baldwin (ed.) (1905), 1, 316.

philosophers or historians of the subject to ask whether contemporary ‘emotions’ are, or are not, the same things as ‘passions’ (or ‘affections’ or ‘sentiments’).

It may be helpful, in order to clarify what I mean by saying that ‘emotions’ are not the same things as ‘passions’ to make a distinction between the extensions and the intensions of these terms. Modern-day uses of ‘emotions’ have both different extensions and different intensions from older uses of ‘passions’. Of course neither term has ever had a fixed meaning or a fixed extension, but there have been general tendencies, and some degree of consensus. The extension of ‘emotions’ (the items included in the category), for example, tends to include many feelings that might previously have been categorised not as passions but as appetites (e.g. lust), or affections (e.g. religious feelings), or sentiments (e.g. sympathy).

Although there would clearly be a large amount of overlap, as Annette Baier has pointed out, between the extensions of Descartes’, Hobbes’ and Hume’s category of ‘passions’, Darwin’s and other contemporary theorists’ ‘emotions’, and what Spinoza, Kant and many modern psychologists call ‘affects’, it is going too far to hope that the lists of the items in these categories’ extensions would ‘be more or less the same, or inter-translatable’. As Baier herself goes on to point out, to take just one more example, the ‘passions’, but not the ‘emotions’ or ‘affects’, tended to include desires and motives in addition to other feelings.<sup>43</sup> Finally, when it comes to thinking about extensions, it is worth noting that there has never been any consensus about the number of passions or emotions, nor about the number of ‘basic’ or ‘principal’ passions or emotions. Descartes lists forty-one passions, Hobbes forty-six, Spinoza forty-eight and Hume about twenty.<sup>44</sup> Nineteenth- and twentieth-century lists of emotions have been much longer – James McCosh’s *The Emotions* (1880) lists over a hundred. On the question of basic passions or emotions, some, such as Augustine, have sought to reduce all the passions and affections to forms of a single movement – love; others have suggested a longer list of four, five or more basic passions or emotions (Aquinas suggested both four and eleven as possibilities).

The intension of ‘emotion’ (the definition of the term) has differed very significantly from the intension of ‘passion’: the former has tended to be defined in an amoral way as an autonomous physical or mental state characterised by vivid feeling and physical agitation, the latter has been defined in more morally and theologically engaged ways as a disobedient and morally dangerous movement of the soul (as well as often being used in a vague and general way to refer to a variety of lively mental states).

<sup>43</sup> Baier (1990), 2.      <sup>44</sup> Baier (1990), 5.

Similar points could also be made (about differing extensions and intensions) when comparing modern-day uses of ‘emotions’ with older uses of ‘sentiments’ and ‘affections’ and even with differing uses of the term ‘emotions’ itself. The details and nuances of these distinctions form the subject of the rest of this book.

Historians of psychology could perhaps benefit from thinking about similar questions of terminology and anachronism that arise in the histories of the physical sciences. Most historians of chemistry would not be prepared to consider dephlogisticated air and oxygen the same thing, nor would the historian of early-modern science be prepared to consider natural philosophers and scientists the same things. Let us consider the case of Joseph Priestley and his creation, in his experiments on airs, of one particular substance that he called ‘dephlogisticated air’.<sup>45</sup> We now might look back and say that what he called ‘dephlogisticated air’ is what we would call ‘oxygen’. However it would not be accurate to say that Priestley had a theory of oxygen. His term ‘dephlogisticated air’ would, I believe, have included in its extension samples that we would consider to be atmospheric air with an increased proportion of oxygen present, as well as samples we would consider to be pure oxygen. And the intension of the term is not the same at all, being defined as it is in terms of a substance – phlogiston – and a whole theoretical apparatus that are both quite alien to our modern-day chemical conceptions of oxygen and combustion. Just as it would thus be confusing to claim that Priestley had a theory of oxygen, so I think it is often confusing to suggest that writers referring to *pathē* (in Greek), to *passiones*, *affectiones* or *affectus* (in Latin), or to ‘passions’, ‘affections’ or ‘sentiments’, had a theory of emotions.

### *An Anglophone history*

A final methodological note concerns the relative positions given to English-language and non-English-language texts in this study. This story of the creation of the category of ‘emotions’ during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could have been told in many different ways. The decisions that I made about how to present the story, which aspects and writers to focus upon and, especially, which aspects and writers to omit, led to the study taking the particular form that it did. One omission from my narrative is an account of the development of affective psychologies by continental European writers, to complement the account offered of Anglophone theorists.

<sup>45</sup> Priestley (1774b).

There are two main reasons why these writers were largely excluded. First, the particular puzzle that this book tackles is why it was that the words ‘passions’ and ‘affections’ were displaced by the word ‘emotions’ in psychological texts during the nineteenth century. Since this is a puzzle that is so specifically about these English words, it is one that is particular to English-language psychological texts. Terminology in affective psychologies written in other languages (e.g. German terms such as *Affekte*, *Leidenschaft*, *Gefühl* and *Empfindung*; and the way that French writers used *passions*, *émotions* and *sentiments*) would form a rich and interesting subject for additional research but one that lies outside the scope of this book.

Secondly, the primary focus of this book is on the history of psychological language and categories rather than on those mental states themselves that have been variously categorised as ‘passions’, ‘affections’, ‘emotions’ etc. This focus also, of course, leads to discussions about the content and implications of theories that employ various terms, such as ‘emotions’. However, since one of the leading claims of my argument is that we should not assume that ‘emotions’ and ‘passions’ are the same things, it would have been equally problematic for me to look at theories in other languages, with their own different terms and categories and to treat them also as theories of ‘emotions’. The assumption that psychological theories, regardless of their language and categories, pick out theory-independent mental states that we can identify with our own current English-language psychological terms is one of the assumptions that this book challenges.

It is not supposed, however, that English-language psychology existed in a vacuum. There are, of course, very interesting links to be made between English-language and continental psychologies throughout the period under consideration; and where these links are particularly pertinent they are discussed. One example of this is the question of whether eighteenth-century English-language writers who used ‘emotions’ as a psychological category took the term from Descartes’ use of *émotions* in his discourse on the passions of the soul.

### **From passions and affections to emotions: an overview of the argument**

The story that I tell below about how the psychological category of emotions came to be created and adopted during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries proceeds both chronologically and thematically. I start by examining some eighteenth-century Christian ideas about appetites, passions, affections and moral sentiments; and finish by discussing the